

Peru at the Polls

Election Watched as Barometer Of Continent's Anti-Democratic Trend

LIMA, PERU

Here in Lima, the "City of Kings" from which Spanish viceroys ruled their new world for nearly 300 years, the brief Peruvian summer is almost over and the days are getting short. Soon the *Garua*, a gray winter mist, will settle on the land, and the Peruvian capital will see no more sun until October.

The hazy *Garua*, though, is no fogger than the Peruvian political situation. Peru is getting ready for a presidential election—a rerun of one less than a year ago, which was canceled by the military—and the atmosphere here could be described as "watchful waiting."

The election is scheduled for June 9, 364 days after last year's charade. But schedules don't mean much in Latin America, and even if the voting comes off as planned, there is no guarantee the military will honor the results. Further, there's a question whether the military junta that took over last year as a "caretaker" regime will allow genuinely free elections in any event. The prospects are doubtful.

Anti-Democratic Trend

Although most people here don't seem to care much about the election, it's being watched carefully in other capitals in the hemisphere. The United States, for instance, is concerned about an increasingly anti-democratic trend in Latin American politics, of which Peru is a good example, and would like to see it halted. (Since the inauguration of the Alliance for Progress, three Latin nations—Argentina, Peru, and Guatemala—have come under the sway of military juntas.) Other South American governments, notably Venezuela and Brazil, see this trend as a threat to their own democratic regimes.

The trend probably won't be reversed in Peru for a while, however. True, Gen. Nicolas Lindley Lopez, new chief of the junta, recently said that "all candidates for the presidency have the same rights." Later the same day, though, he said, "The junta will not permit anyone in the government who is contrary to the decision of the armed forces." At least one current candidate, Victor Raul Haya de la Torre of the almost legendary APRA party, easily fits that definition.



Gen. Lindley

APRA, which stands for American Popular Revolutionary Alliance, was the major winner in last year's vote, but the military coup prevented the party from ever taking office.

Since most people know the military still feels the same way, there's general election apathy here. It was summed up by a man in a coffee shop: "Even if we have elections, so what? The candidates are the same as last year, the issues are the same, the only difference is that now we have a military junta instead of a constitutional government. I don't believe in miracles, friend."

Interpreting a Hint

Some have other theories about the situation. In a recent talk with some Peruvian businessmen, General Lindley strongly hinted that neither he nor other members of the junta would be around much longer, and one man interpreted the hint this way: "The impression I got was that, rather than allow free elections, the military will throw out the present junta and install a new one. That would settle the issue for the time being, anyway, and the majority of the armed forces would be in favor of it because APRA looks even stronger this year than last."

APRA, mainly, is the creature of Dr. Haya, who made his first bid for the presidency back in 1931 and has since given the country's landed oligarchy no rest, although his party has been officially outlawed in most elections. At 68, he's probably making his last bid for the big prize. He is a brilliant orator and writer and one of the most determined reformers in the history of modern Latin America.

APRA—in Washington's eyes, at least—represents the "pro-Western, democratic left" that many people see as the only hope for progress and democracy in Latin America. But in the eyes of the Peruvian military, APRA is an enemy and a threat to everything decent.



Dr. Haya

The feud between APRA and the military goes back to the election of 1931, when Haya got unexpected support from the peasant masses and the election was canceled by the military. Apristas retaliated by attacking an army barracks in Trujillo, Haya's home town, and killing 26 soldiers. The army then massacred some 5,000 Apristas and swore eternal enmity.

Is the Military Changing?

Some diplomats, though, feel the mind of the military is changing. "We're getting away from that old cliché about the arch-conservative cabal—the army and the oligarchy," says one United States observer. "The army is becoming more middle-class and reform minded. It's no longer the willing servant of the oligarchy."

Haya got the most votes in last year's election, but failed to win the votes of the constitutionally required one-third of the electorate. The outcome was then thrown into congress, where APRA had enough strength to dominate the action. So the military simply took over the government, saying the elections had been a massive fraud. They had not been, but it was hard to argue with tanks ramming through the gates of the presidential palace at 3 a.m.

General Lindley now keeps the palace well-guarded. Between the street and the

office of the general's press secretary recently I was stopped and questioned four times, and counted 27 soldiers carrying either submachine guns or rifles with fixed bayonets.

There are three major candidates for the presidency, but the central issue of the campaign is the old quarrel between APRA and the military. Some Peruvians feel the Apristas are more determined this year than last, and desperate enough to



Belaunde



Odria

resort to mass violence if the military takes a hard stand against them. The Communists would like this kind of chaos. Though the Red menace isn't a political factor here, APRA's collapse would leave a big vacuum that the Reds would immediately fill.

For this reason, many young professional people say the best hope for the present lies in Fernando Belaunde Terry, who finished a close second behind Haya last year. Belaunde's program is not much different from APRA's, but he is more nationalistic and less pro-West.

"He's the best of a bad lot," says one Peruvian. "I don't like the man, but we've got to find some way out of this muddle, and Belaunde might be it."

Belaunde, then, could make it by default. It not, the only other hope for avoiding bloodshed or a military dictatorship is a possible compromise between the candidates themselves. Many people are counting on this. Says one United States businessman: "These guys are doing a lot of politicking. By the time elections roll around, they'll have it all worked out."

This may account for the lack of traditional Latin election madness here. No sound trucks roam the city, no shouting mobs gather in the Plaza San Martin, no planes dump tons of leaflets down on the narrow, sooty streets. If not for a few signs, small stories in the newspapers, and occasional paid ads on TV, a visitor would never guess that a general election is only a few weeks away.

A Former Dictator

A compromise between APRA and the third candidate, Manuel Odria, might be too big for the military to handle. Odria, a retired army general and dictator of Peru from 1948 to 1956, finished third last year and would not need much to put him over this time. An arrangement with APRA could do the trick.

APRA still controls nearly a third of the nation's 2,000,000 voters; Odria has the backing of Lima's financial circles, much of the middle class, and nearly all foreign business interests in Peru. Odria is the candidate of the oligarchy, and members of the oligarchy have demonstrated that they are not above compromising with APRA, even though their platforms are diametrically opposed. The fact that hundreds of thousands of Apristas would consider themselves sold down the river by such a deal appears to be immaterial.

The outlook is not bright. No matter what the outcome of the elections, Washington will have to accept the least objectionable of several evils: A military dictatorship, a violent explosion benefitting nobody but the Communists, or a cynical compromise that will do little more than perpetuate the status quo and postpone the inevitable.

—HUNTER S. THOMPSON

Did Translators Alter Encyclical? Jesuit Says So

Pope John XXIII's recent encyclical, *Peace on Earth*, may have been more emphatic in its hopes for the United Nations, less emphatic on the dangers of nuclear testing, than the world at first believed.

A prominent American Catholic priest charged last week that Vatican translators, in an "apparently calculated" move, had distorted the meaning of passages on these issues.

The priest, the Rev. Edward A. Conway, the Jesuit director of the Center for Peace Research at Creighton University, Omaha, Neb., accused Vatican aides of "cooling off His Holiness" by making "no fewer than 40 faulty renditions of the original Latin" in the Italian translation of the 28 paragraphs on disarmament and international organizations. The English version, he said, faithfully follows the Italian.

Whereas the Pope's Latin said that he "desires vehemently" that the United Nations meet the challenges that confront it, said Father Conway, "the Italian translator uses what is probably the weakest word available, 'auspichiamo,' which means literally 'we augur' or 'we wish—but not too strongly.'"

Pacifists and advocates of unilateral disarmament have capitalized on a mis-translation in the nuclear testing section of the papal letter. Father Conway said. The Latin, according to Father Conway, says: "It is to be feared that the very testing of atomic weapons, undertaken for the sake of war, may seriously endanger various kinds of life on earth." In place of the relatively mild "may seriously endanger various kinds of life," the translators said "will have fatal consequences for life"—a phrase of vastly different meaning.